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## **Alexandria Named One of the Nation's *100 Best Communities for Young People* by America's Promise Alliance and ING**

### *Competition Recognizes Community's Efforts to Assure All Children Thrive*

[October, 2011 Alexandria, Virginia]— For the fourth time in a row, Alexandria has achieved national recognition as one of America's Promise Alliance's *100 Best Communities for Young People presented by ING* for its initiatives to help young people. The competition recognizes communities across the country that focus on reducing high school dropout rates and providing service and support to their youth. Alexandria had a number of accomplishments that led to the award, but it was the Brent Place initiative that most impressed America's Promise.

The youth of Brent Place are developing a new lease on life as a result of AmeriCorps workers who literally make their home there. The Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services and the AmeriCorps workers established ChildThrive!, an initiative that delivers a variety of desperately needed as well as innovative services to Brent Place residents, such as a sit-down dinner for teen males that afforded them the opportunity to talk candidly about sex and drugs with Mayor William D. Euille, Chief Earl Cook, local role model Tony "Da Beast" Suggs and teen dads. ChildSave! is a partnership between ChildThrive!, TD Bank and Policy America that encourages families, residents and businesses to contribute to Children's Development Accounts (CDAs) for the two hundred youth who reside at Brent Place.

A mentoring program inspired by Congressman James Moran (D-VA-8th District) cemented Alexandria's standing as a winner. That inspiration was sparked by comments from Alexandria youth in a local newspaper regarding a lack of positive adult intervention in their lives. The Congressman approached two prominent black churches in Alexandria – Alfred Street Baptist and Shiloh Baptist – to propose that they partner to create and conduct a mentoring program for male students at T.C. Williams High School. The partnership was established and then broadened to include the Northern Virginia Urban League.

America's Promise asked each city to select a Hometown Hero, a caring adult that goes above and beyond to improve the lives of children. Alexandria selected Sean McEneaney, Chair of the recently disbanded Early Childhood Commission. His vision and leadership marshaled broad-based support that led to the establishment of the new Children, Youth & Families Collaborative Commission.

"We are proud of Alexandria for being named one of the America's Promise Alliance's *100 Best*," said Mayor William D. Euille. "This award recognizes the hard work of many

community members who have dedicated their time to making a difference in the lives of our young people.”

“In a nation where 7,000 students drop out of high school every day, we hope Alexandria’s initiatives inspire other communities across the nation to take action to solve the challenges facing their young people,” said Marguerite W. Kondracke, America’s Promise Alliance president and CEO. “Alexandria is especially deserving of this recognition due to their efforts to ensure that their young people graduate high school and go on to lead healthy, productive lives. Alexandria refuses to let the challenges they face determine the future for their young people. Instead, they are helping their youth prosper and become contributing members of society.”

“The issues surrounding youth education and success are of vital importance to ING,” said ING Foundation President Rhonda Mims. “Our ongoing support for *100 Best* underscores our commitment to the cause and the value we place on recognizing communities that produce measurable results for youth.”

Alexandria will receive a \$2,500 grant, signage identifying the community as one of the nation’s *100 Best Communities for Young People*, and access to America’s Promise Alliance’s community development resources.

All communities entering the *100 Best* competition completed a rigorous application in which they detailed how their programs and initiatives help deliver the Five Promises: caring adults, safe places, healthy start, effective education and opportunities to help others. Applicants were also asked to describe how different sectors of their community work together to help children and families overcome challenges. Most importantly, communities were judged on the strength and innovation of their efforts help young people graduate from high school, prepare for college and enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.

This year, more than 300 communities nationwide were nominated for the *100 Best* distinction. The winners are a diverse group, ranging from small communities to large cities. A list of all 2011 winners can be found at [www.americaspromise.org/100best](http://www.americaspromise.org/100best).

Being a *100 Best* community not only demonstrates commitment to local young people; the award fosters local pride, bolsters economic development and shines the spotlight on the people and programs that are building better communities. The competition also facilitates the sharing of best practices among communities nationwide regarding education, access to health care, reading score improvement, youth service and pre-school enrollment.

**About America's Promise Alliance**

America's Promise Alliance is the nation's largest partnership organization dedicated to improving the lives of children and youth by raising awareness, supporting communities, and engaging in nonpartisan advocacy. Through our Grad Nation campaign, we harness the collective power of our partner network to mobilize Americans to end the high school dropout crisis and prepare young people for college and the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. Building on the legacy of our Founding Chairman General Colin Powell, the Alliance believes the success of our young people is grounded in the Five Promises—caring adults; safe places; a healthy start; an effective education; and opportunities to help others. For more information about America's Promise Alliance, visit [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org).

**About ING**

ING is a global financial institution of Dutch origin offering banking, investments, life insurance, and retirement services to over 85 million residential, corporate and institutional clients in more than 40 countries. With a diverse workforce of about 115,000 people, ING is dedicated to setting the standard in helping our clients manage their financial future.

In the U.S., the ING (NYSE: ING) family of companies offers a comprehensive array of financial services to retail and institutional clients, which includes life insurance, retirement plans, mutual funds, managed accounts, alternative investments, direct banking, institutional investment management, annuities, employee benefits, and financial planning. ING holds top-tier rankings in key U.S. markets and serves nearly 30 million customers across the nation.

ING's diversity management philosophy and commitment to workplace diversity, diversity marketing, corporate citizenship and supplier diversity fosters an inclusive environment for employees that supports a distinctive product and service experience for the financial services consumer. For more information, visit [www.ing.com/us](http://www.ing.com/us).

**About the ING Foundation**

The ING Foundation's mission is to improve the quality of life in communities where ING operates and its employees and customers live. Through charitable giving and employee volunteerism, the foundation focuses on programs in the areas of financial literacy, children's education, diversity, and environmental sustainability. For more information, visit [www.ing-usafoundation.com](http://www.ing-usafoundation.com).

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